

## **RESOLUTION 12-C-04**

### **A RESOLUTION SETTING FORTH THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG'S 2005 LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS**

The general legislative policy of the Town of Blacksburg is that the General Assembly must permit Virginia local governments to govern. The state is an entity and, as such, has a job description that includes those things that cannot be done well, if at all, by local government. Conversely, the state should not usurp the taxing authority and service delivery that are clearly within the purview of local government. Local governments need broad authority from the General Assembly to address local problems and issues. While counties, cities, and towns across the Commonwealth experience similar challenges, the appropriate response may vary from locality to locality. Thus, authorizing legislation should empower local governments, without dictating a single, statewide, solution. Finally, governing requires financial resources. Blacksburg currently enjoys a diverse revenue stream, but the financial health of the town would be adversely affected by the legislative impairment of any financial sources.

#### **Land Use**

##### **Local Decision Making**

Planning and land use policy are essential functions of local government. Localities should maintain control of local land use decisions. Land use and zoning decisions in the Town of Blacksburg are guided by the Town's Comprehensive Plan which is developed with significant local citizen input. By closely adhering to the Town's Comprehensive Plan, local land use decisions are directed by the vision of the local community. The Town of Blacksburg opposes any efforts by State and Federal government to direct or restrict land use planning and decision making by local governments. The General Assembly should enhance local government's ability to implement their comprehensive plans by allowing for local decision making and authorizing a full spectrum of land use and planning tools for local elected bodies to use.

##### **Manufactured Homes**

Zoning is inherently a local government issue. The state should not adopt blanket legislation which dictates local land use choices. The Town of Blacksburg opposes legislation which would require all localities throughout the Commonwealth to permit manufactured housing in all residential zoning districts. While this may be appropriate in some localities, it is not appropriate in all localities. The decision whether to permit manufactured housing is a local decision.

##### **Rental Inspection**

Rental inspection programs are a tool by which local governments protect the health and safety of tenants and the property values and viability of neighborhoods. The General Assembly should take no action that would

diminish the authority of local governments to protect the lives, health, and safety of their residents through these programs. If anything, the General Assembly should strengthen existing authority and clarify local flexibility in fashioning a program that meets local needs.

## **Transportation**

### **Funding**

The Town of Blacksburg urges the state's leaders to address the documented transportation funding shortfalls for both maintenance and construction.

### **Local Option Construction Administration**

The Town of Blacksburg supports the option of localities to manage their own urban highway construction programs without unnecessary oversight or financial burdens from the state government.

### **Local Option Roadside Management**

The Town of Blacksburg supports the local option for roadside management which would allow local governments and civic groups to provide additional maintenance and beautification to state maintained highways above what is currently provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

### **Public Transportation**

Blacksburg is home to a very successful public transportation system, Blacksburg Transit. The Town of Blacksburg encourages increased state and federal funding for local transit agencies and policies that allow for the maximum use of that funding. The Town also requests that the state government ensure that new services provided by adjacent local transit systems provide services that compliment both systems and not create competing local transit services.

### **TransDominion Express**

The Town of Blacksburg strongly supports passenger rail service to southwest Virginia. The TransDominion express will help to stimulate economic development and tourism as well as helping to alleviate the demands on Interstate 81.

## **Finance**

### **Local Control**

Local governments must retain control of their existing revenue sources so that they have a reliable revenue base to meet the needs of their citizens. To ensure the stability and long-term viability of Virginia local governments, the state must broaden the revenue sources available to local governments. Local control of revenue sources is essential in light of local governments' historical experience with state funding commitments. A prime example is the state's failure to meet its HB 599 obligations, which distribute state revenues to localities with police departments. The General Assembly should not reduce or narrow the taxing authority of local governments.

### **Relationship of Towns to Counties**

Towns are essential units of local government providing enhanced services to incorporated, urbanized areas of counties. The General Assembly should carefully review all legislation dealing with local governments to avoid enacting laws that would create conflicts between towns and their surrounding county.

### **Fully Fund State Services**

The state should fully fund existing services that it requires local governments to provide and avoid shifting the costs of these services to local governments.

### **Restore Funding**

Local officials have very few revenue options which forces them to rely heavily on real estate business license and other local taxing sources to provide revenue to fund services. Historically, the General Assembly has reduced the state's obligation for payments from the state to local governments. The General Assembly should restore these payments to local governments such as local share of ABC revenues and HB599 funding for local police forces.

### **Photo Red Enforcement**

The Town of Blacksburg supports legislation to allow for photo enforcement to detect drivers running red lights. The Town of Blacksburg supports the continuation of photo-red enforcement in northern Virginia localities as well as legislation to expand this authority to other localities including the Town of Blacksburg.

### **Transportation of Psychiatric Patients**

Local law enforcement agencies are required by the State to transport Virginia residents in need of involuntary psychiatric evaluation to mental health facilities. Many of these patients are required to be transported long distances to an acceptable institution. This requires local law enforcement officers to leave their jurisdictions while transporting these patients over significant distances, many times impacting the available police strength in their own communities. Local police officers are not trained to properly respond to any medical or psychiatric incident or emergency which might develop during these transports. These transports place a burden on local law enforcement agencies through unbudgeted overtime, loss of police patrols, and the stress associated with such transports. The Town of Blacksburg requests that the State take progressive and appropriate steps to remove local law enforcement agencies from this inappropriate and improperly imposed responsibility.

### **Telecommunications**

The Town Council opposes any legislation which removes taxing authority from local governments with regards to telecommunications and use of local rights-of-way. Local authority to impose reasonable taxes upon telecommunications services should be preserved.

### **Charter University**

The Town of Blacksburg requests that the General Assembly closely study the issue of charter universities and potential impacts on the cities, towns and counties in which they

reside. Charter status would make Virginia Tech and other state universities a political subdivision of the state similar towns, cities, and authorities. There are many questions that are unanswered about such a widespread creation of new political entities and the impact of these on existing localities. Virginia colleges and universities lie within the borders of existing local governments. It is unclear how charter university status will impact interrelationships with local governments.

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ATTEST:

Donna Boone-Caldwell  
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